



The
**HEALTHY
SCHOOL CHILD**

WELLCOME
LIBRARY

General Collections

P

5476

Wellcome Library



22503571140

THE HEALTHY SCHOOL CHILD

LIFE CONSERVATION SERVICE
OF THE
JOHN HANCOCK
MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

COPYRIGHT, 1940
JOHN HANCOCK MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

THE HEALTHY SCHOOL CHILD

This booklet for parents is about the health of the child particularly during the years of the elementary grades. It has two purposes: Part I points out some of the things parents may do to help their youngsters build sturdy bodies and minds, and Part II describes some of the services that the schools may undertake for the better health of all young school children. When parents understand the value of the modern school health program, and when home and school are in harmony, then truly shall we see great progress made toward the goal of healthy American childhood.

YOUR child enters school for the first time. Consider for a moment the ordeal he undergoes. Having been an important person in his own little world since birth, he suddenly finds himself only one among many. It is no longer what *he* wants, but what *they* want that must come first. After his first years, spent for the most part in following his own desires, he now finds that he must submit to the wishes of others, applying himself to new and strange tasks. Surely this is a time to test the mettle of the sturdiest youngster.

His small body, too, must adjust itself to new conditions. He has grown strong, let us hope, while playing in the fresh air and health-giving sunshine with a few children of about his own age. Now he must spend many of the daylight hours indoors in close contact with a large class of youngsters. This means that his young body must accustom itself to new conditions of living, and defend itself against exposure to the diseases of childhood.

The Healthy School Child



*First days at school are
a great adventure.*

It must be clear that the early school years are a time when every available safeguard should be thrown about your child so that both his growing body and his expanding mind may be protected and nourished.

The experts have learned much in recent years about preserving the health of the child while at home, and in the school, and on the playground. And many school systems are doing their share in protecting the children's health. Often, however, the youngsters fail to receive all the benefits they might get from the health services be-

cause their parents, having only hazy notions about the program, do not cooperate with the school authorities.

PART I

WHILE YOUR CHILD IS AT HOME

GROWING like a weed and as lively as a cricket, a youngster of elementary school age needs the constant, thoughtful care of his parents. Children, at this interesting stage of their development, often seem so full of vitality that mothers and fathers may not realize that almost daily attention should be given to the kind of food their children eat, the amount of rest they get, the character of their play, the control of their emotions and their practice of the rules of cleanliness. More than most parents realize, it is upon just such seemingly minor matters as these that success, or lack of it, in later life depends.

The Healthy School Child

Think what is happening to your own youngster's body. When he enters the first grade he weighs, let us say, about 40 pounds. When he completes the fourth grade he will weigh considerably more than half as much again, perhaps nearly 70 pounds. This is a period when all the organs of the body are undergoing the development that will mean much to the future health of the man or woman your child is to become. One visible evidence of this development is the appearance of his first permanent teeth. Parents know that dental care is needed especially for the newly-erupted "six year" molars. And, by the same token, medical attention is needed for the whole rapidly growing body.

Building Materials for the Body

All the flesh and bone and sinew that this child of yours is to put on during his early school years must come from the food he eats. Nowhere else can he get the building materials, for they can't be manufactured from thin air. So it is important that he eat just the right foods, those that will furnish the material from which flesh and bones are made. The over-active child usually has a good appetite—but not always for the right kind



Attractive servings whet appetites for the needed foods.

The Healthy School Child

of food. It is your job to see that your child eats the body-building foods; you need not worry about the rest.

Each and every day your child should have these few simple dishes:

Two glasses of milk; an egg; one serving of meat (or substitute); one potato and two servings of other vegetables; two servings of fruit, or juice; some dark bread or cereal; and butter.

If he eats these, then he can make up the remainder of his dietary needs from whatever of the starchy, sweet, and fatty foods he likes best. It is unnecessary to repeat here all the reasons why your rapidly growing child needs each one of these dishes, for the explanation is given in "What to Eat and Why"*. Instead it will be more profitable to discuss ways of inducing your child to eat the foods his body needs most.

Children, being great imitators, tend to become finicky about eating, for they often hear other youngsters, and sometimes their own parents tell about dislikes for certain dishes. Also account must be taken of a perfectly natural distaste for new flavors. Every one of us likes some food today which was once distasteful to him. So it is your responsibility, as a parent, to see that your child learns to like the right foods.

Here are some well-proved methods:

Set a good example. Fathers and mothers should eat, with evident relish, all the foods that they expect their child to eat. Never should they express dislike for foods their child must have.

Offer new foods in small amounts. When new vegetables or fruit dishes are first set before your child, give only a small portion. If the food is refused at first, wait for a few weeks before serving it again.

Take pains to make the serving attractive. Learn new ways of cooking meat, vegetables, and fruit, and don't repeat the same dishes until the child and all the family tire of them.

*"WHAT TO EAT AND WHY" is a John Hancock health booklet. A copy will be sent free upon request.

The Healthy School Child



Sleeping the clock around helps make sturdy bodies.

Your child needs at least two glasses of milk each day. If it is served fresh and chilled, most children like their milk straight. For those few who do not, it may be served on cereal and in creamed vegetables, soups, and milk desserts, or in flavored milk drinks. Children should not have coffee or tea.

See to it that your child has time to eat a good breakfast. Gulping a few mouthfuls of food and rushing off to school is a bad habit, for which parents are responsible. Your child can be wakened early enough for him to eat without hurry a substantial breakfast, and still have time to go to the toilet afterward, for this is when the bowels tend to move—a habit to be encouraged.

In school, your child will be taught the reasons he needs milk, vegetables, and fruit every day. Modern health teaching leads the child to want to eat the foods that he must have to be vigorous and strong. Your job, as a parent, is to supply these foods just as attractively as you can to tempt your child's palate.

Finally, just one "don't"! Don't nag. Remember that spurts in growth are natural. Also that there will be days when your

The Healthy School Child

child needs less food than at other times. Don't make his life miserable by insisting always that he eat as much as you think he should.

Rest and Good Fun

It is possible for your child to eat plenty of wholesome food and yet be undernourished. Strangely enough, more than food is needed, for rest is another factor in nutrition. Going at the lively gait he does, the child of elementary school age needs twelve hours of sleep each night. Later, in the intermediate grades he will need ten, and when in high school an average of eight or nine hours of sleep. If your child does not get the sleep he needs, he may become irritable, nervous, and undernourished: often he can be restored to health simply by your seeing to it that he gets enough sleep.

Ambitious parents sometimes load too much upon young school children. Naturally they want their child to do well in school, so they see to it that homework is not neglected. In addition they may arrange for music or dancing lessons, or encourage other out-of-school activities. But care should be taken to see that school homework, music practice, and the other activities do not prevent your child from getting some outdoor play and, as well, the chance to sleep the clock around.

How your child plays should be a matter of interest to you. The desire for fun is so natural in a youngster that failure to play happily with other children



Out-of-school activities should be limited.

The Healthy School Child

may be a sign that your child is undernourished or otherwise under par. Perhaps, it is because he has not learned to play well and is unwilling to have others "show up" his lack of skill. Children sometimes need guidance in their play. This need is met in part in some schools by specially trained teachers who supervise games. Organizations for children below "Scout" age also do much to help their little charges with crafts and games. But these agencies do not relieve parents of their own responsibilities in these matters. Fathers and mothers should take enough interest in their children to see that they can play games suitable to their age and the seasons of the year. Thus they add to their children's happiness and safety.

Toward Sound Mental Health

How your child behaves when he plays should have meaning for you, his parent. Does he squabble continuously? Are others forever "picking on" him? Or is he willing to "give and take" contentedly with others? These, and more play reactions are like straws in the wind that show the way your child's character is growing.

Long before your child is ready to enter school, good mental habits should have been formed, for it is between two and six that a child's character is molded most easily. By your good example, your sympathetic interest, your patient explanations, and by your firm but kindly insistence upon obedience you help him to mature into a happy, healthy personality.

Before he is six he should have:

—learned to obey all reasonable parental requirements. (Parents should avoid unnecessary restrictions on their children's activities, but be invariably just and firm in important matters.)

—acquired self-control, especially in his relations with other children so that he fits in happily with his playmates. (If your child has been allowed to have his own way by crying, tantrums, bullying behavior, he isn't growing up!)

The Healthy School Child . . .

—become self-reliant in situations where he may safely be “on his own.” (The over-protected or dominated child hesitates to try to meet new responsibilities.)

—learned to tell the truth in important matters. (The parent who tells “little white lies” may find his child unable to distinguish between petty and serious falsehoods.)



Skillfully supervised games are safest.

—overcome unreasonable fears. (Most children become afraid of the dark, or the like. The wise parent does not show fear himself, and he helps explain away childish terrors.)

If desirable mental habits such as these have not been well established when your child goes to school, it is time that serious thought be given to his character building.* If, despite your best efforts, any of these bad mental habits persist well into the elementary school age period, it may be that you need expert guidance in solving the problems of your child's behavior. Your

*“YOUR CHILD GROWS UP” discusses these matters and questions of children's responsibilities in more detail: the difficult problem of punishment is also considered. A copy will be sent upon request.

The Healthy School Child

family physician, the public health nurse, or a consulting child specialist may be able to give just the help you need.

Preventing Disease

Thoughtful parents who wish to do everything in their power to guard their children's health have four different measures that they may take: (1) Against two communicable diseases there is complete protection. (2) Unnecessary exposure to the other communicable diseases can be avoided. (3) Cleanly habits taught in childhood help to prevent colds and other infections. (4) By medical and dental examinations physical defects may be discovered at the remediable stage. By giving attention to all these matters, parents may protect their children from illness, and save themselves from worry, inconvenience, and expense in the bargain.

Against diphtheria and smallpox there are preventive measures that are effective, safe, and readily obtainable. Health authorities urge that all babies be protected against diphtheria when about nine months old. At this age two treatments with an



Well-brought-up children do their share of household chores willingly.

The Healthy School Child

immunizing substance, called diphtheria toxoid, given a month apart, will protect your child. If he is still unprotected, you owe it to him to have the treatment given without a day's further delay.

After the baby has been immunized against diphtheria, the experts urge that he be vaccinated against smallpox. In many states vaccination is compulsory before the child is admitted to school, but all authorities are agreed that the vaccination should be done right after the diphtheria treatment in infancy, for then the chance that the site of the vaccination will be contaminated is avoided. The active five-or-six year old child is tempted to scratch the vaccination, for it may itch, and this may cause some trouble.

For some of the other childhood diseases we have protective treatments that are useful under circumstances which will be decided upon in each instance by your physician. A scarlet fever toxin confers protection against this disease and should be given when your doctor advises. Whooping cough vaccine, administered to large groups of youngsters in child-caring institutions, for instance, reduces the prevalence of the disease but does not necessarily assure complete protection to each child. Medical opinion increasingly is advocating its more widespread use. Typhoid vaccine may be given when there is the possibility that insanitary conditions may be encountered. The child in the home is not likely to be exposed so openly to infection with the communicable diseases as the child in an institution, but even so contacts are made at schools, playgrounds, beaches, and other places where children gather, and no unnecessary risks should be taken. Without making their youngsters unduly afraid of illness, parents can teach them to keep away from homes in which there are sick children.

If your child has been exposed to a case of communicable disease, keep him under close observation during the time the disease may be going through what is called the incubation period (the time when it develops within his body). The incubation periods, the time of greatest infectiousness, together

The Healthy School Child

with information about the prevention and care of communicable disease are given in another John Hancock booklet.*

You teach your child to wash his face because he looks so much nicer when it is clean. You see to it that he takes his bath weekly, or oftener, for otherwise he would be objectionable. You remind him to brush his teeth because you know his teeth should be bright and clean, and brushing tends to keep the gums healthy. But, of more importance than any of these, are clean hands. You should insist that your child scrub his hands with soap and warm water before each meal. If he is trained to keep his fingers out of his mouth except when they are washed, then you will have helped him master an important health habit, for colds and many other communicable diseases are spread from hand to mouth.



Hands scrubbed before meals prevent many catching diseases.

In all these matters of the prevention and care of the "catching" diseases, you will naturally seek the advice of your family physician. If you are a foresighted mother—or father—you will have continued to take your child to your doctor, or to a clinic, each year or two for an examination even though the youngster seems well. Only by these medical check-ups can you be sure that physical defects are not beginning, for it is during the years of rapid growth that they often occur.

*"HOME CARE OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES" is a useful little manual for parents. It, and "CARING FOR THE SICK IN THE HOME" will be sent free upon request.

PART II

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS IN SCHOOL

SCHOOL authorities quite properly ask you to send your child to school well nourished, free from communicable diseases, and possessed of good habits. It costs your community a great deal of money to educate each pupil, and much of this money may be wasted upon the child who is under-nourished, sick, emotionally upset, or continually over-tired. On the other hand, attendance at school is compulsory, and as you are required to send your child to school, so you may reasonably ask that the school authorities do everything possible for the health and safety of your child while in their care. Both schools and parents have rights and duties in the matter of the young child's welfare.

School and health authorities are now in general agreement about the kind of school health services that the community should provide. Not every school district is financially able to carry on the complete health program, but a goal has been set toward which each community can strive. In brief, a well-rounded school health service includes:

Healthful surroundings.

Prompt care of accidents and sudden illnesses.

Control of communicable diseases.

Graded program of health instruction.

Plan for health examinations.

Follow-up program to remedy discovered physical defects.

Special facilities for the handicapped.

Thoughtful parents will realize that they owe it to their children to make a careful inquiry into the progress the schools of their community have made toward reaching each of these goals. Through their parent-teacher associations especially, they can do much to encourage the extension of the local school health services until a well-rounded program has been achieved. In order that parents may help their community to reach all of

The Healthy School Child

these goals, this booklet ends with a brief discussion of each of the parts of the complete school health program.

Healthful Surroundings

What is your idea of suitable surroundings for your child? In your mind's eye do you see well-ventilated and lighted classrooms, and adequate washing and toilet facilities? That is a reasonable picture, but incomplete. A well-constructed and appointed building is needed, certainly. But more important is its maintenance in a clean, sanitary condition. This implies not only a competent janitor service, but constant vigilance by a supervising committee.



Children can be taught to avoid those who have contagious diseases.

A healthful environment calls for more than a sanitary condition of the schoolhouse; it includes a schoolwork program so arranged as to prevent undue fatigue, with relaxation through play periods under expert supervision. Mental health, too, must be considered. The most important influence for mental health is the personality of the teacher. The experts say that teachers must be firm but kind and friendly but reserved. Incidentally the teachers, and all those people who come in contact with children

The Healthy School Child

should, of course, be free from communicable disease. Many schools now require health examinations of all the personnel.

Accidents and Sudden Illnesses

Wherever large numbers of children are gathered, accidents and sudden illnesses are likely to occur but the schools may properly be asked to do everything possible to prevent accidents and take prompt care of sickness. Accidents may be prevented in part by safety instruction, doing away with imperfect equipment and supervision of play activities about the school. For those pupils who are hurt or become suddenly sick the school should stand ready to provide immediate care, to notify the parents, and to get the child safely home. To do this some person trained in first aid and emergency care of illness should be prepared to take charge at all hours even though the doctor and school nurse may be absent. It is to be expected that first aid supplies and materials needed for the care of illnesses will be kept on hand.

Parents ought to expect nothing but emergency treatment to be given at school. As soon as possible after the accident or illness the child should be taken home so that the family physician may be called to give the needed care. Schools adopt this policy wisely because the proper treatment can be decided upon only after a complete diagnosis.

Controlling Communicable Diseases

From your own knowledge of communicable disease control measures, you would expect the school authorities to take the following steps when a pupil is suspected of having a contagious disease: notify the health department; isolate the sick child from his classmates; send him home with as little delay as possible; and warn the parents of the other children who were found in contact with the sick youngster. If you add the provisions that schools should urge parents to keep all sick children at home, to watch carefully those who have been exposed to any of the

The Healthy School Child

children's diseases and to protect their babies against diphtheria and smallpox, then you have included about all that the schools can do to stop epidemics.

The first item, that of notifying the health department, is usually required by law. Prompt separation of the sick child from his classmates is most important. This rule should be observed with *beginning* colds, for most communicable diseases start with symptoms like a cold, and colds themselves are thought to be most contagious during the first day.

To pick up these cases of communicable disease early, classroom teachers in the elementary grades should be trained to recognize the early signs of children's diseases and to inspect their charges each morning as they enter the classroom.

Many schools notify the parents when their children have been exposed to a communicable disease. This gives the parents the opportunity to watch their children during the incubation period (as explained on page 12).

Graded Health Instruction

It was suggested earlier in this booklet that your child would be taught in school to want to eat the right foods. In the primary grades the teaching emphasis is placed upon healthful living and upon attitudes that will make the child want to be strong and healthy. The attempt at this age is to lay a firm foundation upon which to build good health habits.



Beginning colds are contagious: sick children should be sent home promptly.

The Healthy School Child

Later on the child learns about certain diseases, like appendicitis and cancer, that cannot be prevented by good health practices. He learns, too, about the communicable diseases and methods that he may adopt to avoid them. He learns much else, about first aid, and home hygiene, but principally he gets a valuable understanding of the scientific methods by which we deal with all the enemies of health. That is the goal of the health program.

Planning for Health Examinations

Most modern parents believe in the value of medical examinations for young children. During the baby's first year he is taken regularly to the family doctor or a clinic for a check-up. At lengthening intervals during the toddler stage he is seen by the doctor. During the early school years, periodic health inventories are equally important. Nowadays, some parents see to it that their children get this help. But many still do not. Because some cannot, or will not, school child medical inspection is the keystone of the health program.

In the beginning, school doctors were employed chiefly to discover communicable diseases. Later the goal changed to find-



Parents should be present when children are examined by the doctor.

The Healthy School Child

ing physical defects that might hinder the child's progress in school. Today the medical examinations retain this function but they have an added use when they educate children and parents. This means that, to be of greatest value, the examination should be made preferably in the presence of the mother, but certainly the findings must be interpreted to her by the doctor or nurse. To do this well, it becomes impossible to go hastily over great numbers of youngsters.

So, the current practice is tending toward less frequent but more thorough examinations, and to encourage examinations by the family physician wherever parents are willing to have this done. Certainly each child should be examined before he is enrolled in school. This is the object of the "Summer Round-up" so ably fostered by parent-teacher associations. During the child's stay in the first four grades it is planned nowadays that he have at least two health inventories, preferably with annual inspections of sight and hearing and semi-annual dental examinations.

When Physical Defects Are Found

It is evident that periodic medical inspections are of little value unless something is done to correct the bodily defects that are revealed. Strangely enough it is the follow-up of the examinations to induce parents to give their children the benefit of their physician's care that takes most of the time that the school nurse can devote to home visits.

Treatment of physical defects is not a school function; that should be done by the family physician, or at the clinic, and by the dentist. The school, however, has an interest in each child's condition for, as was said at the beginning, education is largely wasted upon a child who is below par. So, the school nurse shoulders the burden of persuading parents to give their children needed care. If she calls on you, receive her cordially and give heed to her suggestions.

The Healthy School Child

Special Programs for the Handicapped

In general it is best for children with mild physical handicaps to remain in their regular classes. Children with slightly impaired vision or hearing often can keep up with the other children if they are given seats placed where they can see or hear best. Only when the handicap is great, with sight or hearing seriously impaired, or heart badly weakened, or with some severe impairment of ability to get about is it necessary to place children in special classes. In some communities special facilities are also provided for both the more gifted children and those that learn more slowly than the usual child.

Postscript

Your child, before his teens, needs watchful care at home, in the school, and while engaged in all the many other activities of the typical modern youngster. Just as you, the conscientious parent, are seriously handicapped in doing your duty by your child if the school fails in its part, so the school health services can have but little effect upon the welfare of your child if you are negligent. Neither home nor school can entirely succeed without the help of the other, but working together under proper medical guidance they can prevent or solve most of the health problems of the child of school age.

Life Conservation Service of the

